

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUBJECT Railroad Facilities

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. The Soviet Union had railroad transport difficulties throughout the period covered by our knowledge, because of a lack of freight cars and locomotives, poor repair of track, and the fact that the rails were too light (30 kgs/meter).
2. Hopper cars for bulk commodities were scarce. This meant that much hand unloading of bulk commodities had to be done. Sometimes even engineers in plants were called out to help in this manual labor. There were also not enough tank cars; many of the very old two-axle type were used. Flat cars and gondola cars for carrying heavy loads had to be reserved many months in advance of the shipping date. Tank cars were apparently always loaded to capacity. We knew of no cases where tank cars were returned from an unloading point still containing large amounts of POL. If, for example, the train document showed that a car had 20 tons of POL, and it had more, the excess could be sold on the black market. As evidence of full loading of tank cars, we saw at Kramatorsk, fresh oil on the sides of a tank car which had come from Baku, indicating that train motion enroute had caused some liquid to spill out. If an individual was unloading for a plant, where he was responsible for the job, all POL would be unloaded. But if he did it for a Ministry where responsibility was not as direct, he might not be as careful to drain every drop of POL. The only unused freight cars we saw were damaged cars. We doubt whether the Soviets have any possibility of building up freight car reserves as it would not conform to their theory of making full use of capital goods. Freight cars were often in bad repair, and sometimes the cargo had to be transferred to other cars. However, train breakdowns were not too frequent, and freight train wrecks occurred only occasionally. On a trip from Moscow-Poveletskaya station on Moscow-Donbas line, we were impressed with how poor the rolling stock was.
3. The railroads did not have enough cranes for loading and unloading heavy shipments. We believe that there was little mechanical equipment for transloading at Brest because of the slowness with which freight moves from Sovzone Germany to USSR. This conclusion is based on an experience in shipping some winches from Sovzone Germany to the USSR. This was an important shipment, and its delay in Brest caused one of the ministers (probably the Minister for Machinery) to go to investigate personally.

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4. To get personal attention by train personnel on freight shipments, and to assure reasonably prompt delivery of freight shipments, administrative personnel of plants often bribed railroad personnel. Bribes were also necessary to obtain passenger tickets; those who did not give bribes would sometimes have to wait for weeks to get tickets. In winter, traffic was often delayed because of the lack of snow plows. This often held up train movement for days. In summer trains operated pretty much on schedule. In the spring and autumn, trucks could neither deliver freight to, nor receive traffic from minor stations (called punkts) because roads were too muddy.
5. The origin and destination of a freight shipment is not shown on the outside of the Soviet freight cars. We are sure of this because we did notice that it was shown on freight cars in Germany. One reason for not putting this information on the outside of Soviet cars was that people would steal the paper because there was such a shortage of writing paper. We saw some Soviet freight cars on which the original car number had been crossed out and a new one painted below the old number. This was done to foreign freight cars.
6. From 35 to 43 hours time was usually permitted for the unloading of freight cars. However, norms were set for loading and unloading times, depending on the facilities available at the shipping and receiving points. Thus, if a coal loading point had bunkers from which coal could be dropped into cars, its norm for loading time was much less than if loading facilities were not as favorable for rapid loading. If shipment reports were held beyond the time permitted by an organization, they would be sent to the Ministry which governed the organization. Breakage was heavy. This was often due to over-economy in use of packing materials. In addition, loading and unloading was not done carefully, and caused much damage to commodities. In part, this breakage was due to lack of interest by workers.
7. Freight cars were never loaded beyond the market capacity, because there was a likelihood that the individual who did so would be called to account for it. Neither was there underloading, except where necessary. For example, if 15-ton machines were being loaded in a 50-ton box car, the organization would load three machines, for a total of 45 tons, but would not load four machines for a total of 60 tons. The heaviest load carried by a railroad car which was known to us was a 126-ton steam hydraulic press. It was probably carried on a 16-axle flat car. The Soviets have published handbooks for heavy industries which give axle loadings and types of cars used for various types of heavy loads. It also gives instructions on how to load and secure the cargo. When a freight car is loaded, the plant turns it over to a railroad representative in the plant area. The railroad inspects the contents, signs the documents for the car, and seals the car. Freight cars must be sealed in USSR, because if they were not, the contents would be stolen.
8. Periodically, wheels and axles would have to be put in a lathe to restore the smooth surface. New axles had a diameter of 110-120 mm at the point where the bearings touched; but after successive turnings on the lathe, the dimension might be reduced to as little as 85 mm. This lowered the permissible maximum axle loading, which was shown by painting a new tonnage capacity on the side of the car. Standards were set up to indicate the minimum dimension of an axle, after which the axle was replaced. There were similar standards for wheels. When a cast wheel reached the minimum dimension it was replaced; wheels with tires would have the tire changed.
9. We believe that rolling stock with adjustable axles was not practical, and that information on it was disseminated for propaganda purposes only.
10. Railroads were not a bottleneck for the expansion of basic industries. Each plant had to have reserves of fuel and raw materials. Although they were forbidden to draw on these reserves, they did so when railroads fell behind in deliveries. However, these factories never used up their reserves, since the railroads would always get deliveries back on schedule before it was too late. The reserves gave some flexibility to plans and we never heard of a plant having to shut down because it had used up its reserves. On the other hand, tractor stations sometimes did have to stop work because parts or fuel had not been delivered.
11. Freight which is enroute cannot be traced, although the numbers of the cars are telegraphed ahead, and the documents are mailed ahead. Freight cars are often lost because they are placed in trains going in the wrong direction from a junction point. To expedite the movement of a freight car, the factory must send a man with

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cars of important freight (we do not know if he rode with the freight train, or went ahead to junction points by passenger train). At each junction yard this man watches to see that the freight car is placed in the proper train, and he bribes officials or workers where necessary to see that his car is given expedited service. It was definitely necessary to bribe to receive normal service.

12. Before World War II, passenger trains were often held up to let freight trains pass. But following the war, passenger trains were given higher priority. In the USSR freight trains seem to move as fast on the line as passenger trains. Presumably, train graphs in which the schedule of each train is plotted on graph paper, existed for both passenger and freight trains in the USSR.
13. After World War II, main lines were getting new rolling stock, while old rolling stock was being used on secondary lines which have weaker tracks. We would estimate about 40% of the cars in the Donets basin were four-axle.
14. In the USSR there are through-freight trains running between Moscow and the Donbas, and also between the Donbas and large cities south of Moscow. Sovzone Germany has far more trains per day on its main lines than does the USSR.
15. Soviet railroad personnel did not wear uniforms until the end of the war. They continue to wear uniforms and are semi-military. Prewar, they were dressed in very poor clothes.

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